

GOVERNOR'S COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND REHABILITATION  
OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Dimond Center Hotel

Anchorage, Alaska

Thursday, June 21, 2007

1 PUBLIC TESTIMONY

2 MS BISBEE: Okay, let's go back on the  
3 record.

4 MS. JUTZI: I won't be able to stay for  
5 public comment, but can I say a couple words.

6 MS. BISBEE: Sure.

7 MS. JUTZI: Karla Jutzi. You've heard  
8 me talk about spreading too thin for older blind, but  
9 I wanted to bring to the Committee's attention how  
10 grateful we were to be able to partner with the  
11 Division of Voc Rehab to provide training on visual  
12 rehabilitation around the state in April and early  
13 May. And Russ and Charlie Carey and Karen and I at  
14 the center will be meeting in early July to go over  
15 the evaluations and assess that and see what might be  
16 useful for followup.

17 But it was wonderful from the point of  
18 view of being able to personally connect with people  
19 that we only know by phone.

20 So the training was in Anchorage,  
21 Fairbanks and Juneau, and we were delighted with our  
22 national speaker, Melody Linsey, and SueEllen might  
23 want to share her thoughts, but it was an wonderful  
24 opportunity for us to look at what is best practice in  
25 vision rehab training and how we can make it happen in

1 Alaska. So that was very exciting and thank you.

2 I also wanted to thank the committee for  
3 your support of the rural project that was funded,  
4 half of what we requested, but it will allow us to get  
5 started. We're currently recruiting a staff person,  
6 we're looking for certified orientation and mobility  
7 specialists. We're also hoping we can get someone who  
8 is an O and M specialist but has some other experience  
9 in other kinds of training, and again low vision, and  
10 that person will be a full time staff member at the  
11 center whose duties half of the time will be  
12 implementing this rural grant.

13 And I also did want to note, you may  
14 have seen coverage in the paper or in the media, we  
15 were delighted to have a wonderful celebration of our  
16 30th anniversary, several of you were there on the  
17 Park Strip, we had 300 people, and it was just a

18 wonderful -- we had several volunteers who helped us  
19 make 400 calls to former clients, and we were just  
20 thrilled with the turnout of people who used our  
21 services and people who supported us. And there were  
22 dozens of Lions, and Director Gale Sinnott spoke as  
23 part of the program, which we were very happy with,  
24 and it was just a wonderful community building. And  
25 the mayor. It was an opportunity for us to thank

1 everybody and to celebrate the success of the people  
2 we serve, so that was a lot of fun. Thank you.

3 MS. BISBEE: Questions for Karla?

4 MS. O'CONNOR: I would like to say in  
5 response to bringing up that training, I really felt  
6 it was very high quality and thorough training and  
7 that it was really important for all the staff to  
8 participate in that.

9 MR. CUSACK: And I'm glad that Karla had  
10 my back on that, because I would have forgot to bring  
11 that up. But what we hope to do after we meet with  
12 Karla and go over the results. We want to build this  
13 into a component of our regional training that we do  
14 every year. We would like to build in a component of  
15 some kind of blind service training, vision service  
16 training.

17 MS. O'CONNOR: It brought up some really  
18 important questions that counselors see. Like, you

19 know, unless they regularly work with the low vision  
20 and blind clients, that they just aren't sure of, like  
21 what really is legal blindness, and what are some of  
22 the most typical things that you think of with  
23 assistive technology, and just -- it was very  
24 comprehensive.

25 MS. JUTZI: How does that work, why does

1 it take so long, that sort of thing. And Lenny was  
2 there, too. I forgot.

3 MS. STRATTON: I just want to say  
4 something. Unfortunately I was out of state so I  
5 didn't get to come to the training, and I was  
6 disappointed that I missed it. But I have heard from  
7 some counselors around town that they felt it was  
8 really useful. The only thing negative I heard was  
9 the location of the training was less than desirable.

10 MS. JUTZI: The facility in Anchorage,  
11 we had two to choose from. We really did survey the  
12 waterfront and the facility, did not prove to be as  
13 workable as we had hoped, including there were jets  
14 from Elmendorf that made it hard to hear.

15 MS. STRATTON: But I did hear from folks  
16 they really appreciated it.

17 MS. JUTZI: But I was delighted with the  
18 counselors. Everybody agreed this facility isn't  
19 working very well. They cheerfully went on, so I

20 don't see anybody not signing on because this wasn't  
21 going right, but it was great.

22 MS. O'CONNOR: The only one other thing  
23 I did talk with people about that was a negative was  
24 that Dr. Wolf was not able to go through his entire  
25 medical lecture. And so he covered several important

1 vision problems, but he entirely wasn't able to get to  
2 things like, I think glaucoma and a couple other big  
3 ones that we see often. So he was really thorough on  
4 the things he was able to cover, but he needed more  
5 time or less thorough.

6 MS. JUTZI: That's interesting. It was  
7 fun, Charlie and I kind of chatted about this because  
8 he was at all three. It was interesting to compare  
9 the presentations by the medical professionals in all  
10 three places. We had a local optometrist in Fairbanks  
11 and a local ophthalmologist in Juneau. In Fairbanks  
12 she had two hours, and in Juneau the ophthalmologist  
13 was able only to give us one hour, but they were all  
14 three a little bit different. It was interesting.  
15 And I think the Fairbanks optometrist was actually the  
16 best presentation of the three. But that was  
17 interesting. And people appreciated having the local  
18 professionals there in Fairbanks and Juneau, that was  
19 a positive as well.

20 It was really a wonderful experience.

21 Our staff sort of collapsed afterwards because it was  
22 a six-day marathon since we had the national speaker  
23 and she was able to stay with us, rather than going to  
24 the expense of bringing somebody back and forth,  
25 that's the way we planned it. That's why we planned

1 it that way. But it seemed to work.

2 MS. O'CONNOR: And I think it was so  
3 impressive to have a successful totally blind woman  
4 who was so capable.

5 MS. JUTZI: Some of her remarks will be  
6 on the front page of our newsletter that's coming out  
7 soon. So thank you all for the work you do.

8 MS. BISBEE: Thank you. Let's take a  
9 break and come back a little before 4:00.

10 (Break)

11 MS. BISBEE: Okay, let's have some  
12 public testimony. Welcome to the Governor's Committee  
13 on Employment and Rehabilitation of People with  
14 Disabilities public testimony. I have a gentleman by  
15 the name of Nathan that would like to testify. Would  
16 you like to come sit up here or would you like to  
17 stand where you are, it's all up to you?

18 MR. WISE: Well, I would like a table.

19 MS. BISBEE: Pardon?

20 MR. WISE: I would like a table.

21 MS. BISBEE: Well, I'd like to have us  
22 introduce ourselves to you so you know who we are,  
23 because we know who you are. Pinky would you like to  
24 start.

25 MS. TOOYAK: Pinky, Kotzebue.

1 MR. WISE: Nice to meet you.

2 MS. STRATTON: Pam Stratton, Anchorage.

3 MS. BISBEE: Jackie Bisbee, Fairbanks.

4 MS. SIMPSON: Becky Simpson, Anchorage.

5 MS. O'CONNOR: SueEllen O'Connor, I'm  
6 from Wasilla.

7 MS. BISBEE: And we have some Division  
8 of Voc Rehab staff.

9 MR. CUSACK: I'm Russ Cusack, I'm the  
10 chief of services.

11 MS. McINTOSH: I'm Jane McIntosh, I work  
12 for VR, too.

13 MS. ELSTAD: I'm Velja, I work with Voc  
14 Rehab from Juneau, and I'm their staff person.

15 MR. WISE: Nice to meet everybody. Just  
16 like that, I have to be first. I thought I signed my  
17 name at the end.

18 MS. BISBEE: You have to be first  
19 because you're the only one we have right now.

20 MR. WISE: Well, no less than five  
21 minutes, I'm just going to read.

22 I've been having a little bit of  
23 problems with DVR for the past two years. And I'm  
24 appealing my case right now and up for grievance.  
25 The first one is I'll read right here.

1 In the matter of Nathan Wise.

2 My biography. When I was a little kid I  
3 always wanted to drive trucks. I could see myself  
4 playing with my toy trucks and as I got older I  
5 started building truck models as a hobby.

6 History. Now truck driving runs in my  
7 family. My biological father drove a 60-foot fire  
8 engine truck for the Air Force base while he was in  
9 active duty. My oldest brother and younger brother  
10 drove trucks and have their CDL-A. I drove a 40-foot  
11 five speed van truck for the Time's Publishing Company  
12 of Anchorage back in the year of 1990.

13 Goals. I was working part time at the  
14 YMCA as a fitness instructor, clean and sober, looking  
15 for a goal with a new life in commercial truck driving  
16 and obtaining a CDL-A. Through Southcentral Training  
17 Employment Service at VTC, director Michaela Phelps  
18 and Diane Saunders, employment specialists, referred  
19 me to Tom Torvey on October 24th, 2005 at 1:30 p.m. in  
20 an office meeting to establish a viable career goal  
21 and discuss an individual plan for employment, IPE.



22 Months and weeks later Tom and I agreed. On January  
23 25th, '06, Tom Torvey called me at my apartment to  
24 discuss options. Tom asked would I be interested in  
25 taking a crash course, preapprenticeship truck driving

1 program to obtain a CDL-A license. I agreed.

2 Issues. Tom Torvey, MRC CRC, Division  
3 of Vocational Rehabilitation counselor, and Josetta  
4 Cranston, employment specialist. Tom had made a  
5 contract with Service Solutions. The first contract  
6 with DVR was to attend CEE Truck Driving School. Tom  
7 offered me a better deal with Service Solution. I had  
8 been mislead by Josetta on receiving my CDL-A or B  
9 license. At this time I received a B permit from  
10 Service Solution. I was promised a month-and-a-week  
11 of apprenticeship program to facilitate this goal by  
12 Josetta and Tom at DVR expense. I received a  
13 two-weeks pre-apprenticeship training program. I was  
14 promised road driving skills that I needed to get my  
15 CDL-A license. I was not given an opportunity to  
16 drive due to insurance issues with Service Solutions.  
17 I was promised union membership at the conclusion of  
18 my training and had to seek assistance with this goal  
19 elsewhere. Josetta misrepresented herself as a former  
20 employer to a potential employer who discovered this  
21 misinterpretation. As a result I was not hired by  
22 this employer. Josetta assisted me in completing a

23 resume that had an inaccurate five-year gap in my  
24 employment history that caused me embarrassment during  
25 an interview when the potential employer asked me if I

1 had been in jail for five years. Josetta attempted to  
2 entice me to apply for a job that I was not interested  
3 in obtaining, a fish boating. My employment goal was  
4 truck driving. Josetta sent me to interviews without  
5 the proper qualification required by the employer.

6 In conclusion, I respectfully request  
7 that Josetta and Tom not be paid for the services that  
8 I did not receive under my plan with DVR, and that my  
9 original plan with DVR be honored and these original  
10 services be provided by the Center of Employment  
11 Education Fast Track CDL-A course.

12 Just one more thing. That's kind of  
13 what happened in my case. Now what can DVR change to  
14 do better. Well, I believe that DVR should  
15 communicate with the disabled persons and case worker  
16 or doctor or mentor or somebody he or she can trust.  
17 I also believe that DVR should stay in touch with  
18 their clients. DVR should have a meeting together  
19 with their case workers or mentors on a regular basis.

20 After Tom Torvey closed my case I went  
21 to Pam Stratton. Pam Stratton helped set up a meeting  
22 with DVR to renew my contract with DVR so I can obtain

23 my CDL-A license. Pam has been a great help to me and  
24 I appreciate her very much. Thank God for Pam  
25 Stratton, Mr. Wise.

1 MS. BISBEE: Thank you, Nathan. Do we  
2 have anyone on the phone?

3 MS. SIMPSON: Hello, is there someone on  
4 the line.

5 MS. CAMPBELL: Yes.

6 MS. SIMPSON: We have a couple people.  
7 Someone go first.

8 MS. CAMPBELL: I'm Stephanie Campbell.

9 MS. SIMPSON: Go ahead, please.

10 MS. CAMPBELL: I'm not quite sure where  
11 to start. But I'm happy to be invited to the  
12 teleconference and I am with --

13 MS. SIMPSON: Excuse me, Stephanie, can  
14 you speak up, please.

15 MS. CAMPBELL: Is this better? I'm  
16 happy to be part of the teleconference. And I'm  
17 working currently with the Mat-Su DVR, and I am trying  
18 to open my own business. I currently hold a Master's  
19 degree in psychology, and I ran into some obstacles in  
20 the marketplace due to my --

21 MS. SIMPSON: Stephanie, we need you to  
22 speak up.

23 MS. CAMPBELL: Can you hear me?

24 MS. SIMPSON: There you go.

25 MS. CAMPBELL: Let me see if I can

1 adjust. One sec. Is that better?

2 MS. SIMPSON: Yes, that's a lot better.

3 MS. CAMPBELL: Where did I leave off

4 that you heard?

5 MS. SIMPSON: Ran into some obstacles  
6 with typical employment in the marketplace --

7 MS. CAMPBELL: Traditional employment  
8 here in Alaska and inter marketplace. So I contacted  
9 DVR on my behalf after some real frustration, and they  
10 asked me what my goals were. And they kind of left  
11 the door open as to, you know, me looking for further  
12 education or what basically was I interested in.

13 And I told them, you know, opening and  
14 facilitating my own business, which I opted for a  
15 medical billing business, because that is something  
16 that I've done in the past and done successfully for  
17 other people. And they helped me in doing that,  
18 supported me in doing that, and led me down the  
19 avenues I needed to take for the protocol of DVR.

20 And this is brand new for me, so I can't  
21 report on the success yet, but the fact that I am out  
22 there just marketing and people are now hearing a  
23 voice attached to my medical billing service.

24 MS. SIMPSON: Okay. Anything else,

25 Stephanie?

1 MS. CAMPBELL: I'm just delighted to be  
2 a part of it and the DVR system, and I thoroughly  
3 recommend the services to anyone who can obtain them  
4 and qualify to work through DVR. It's truly been a  
5 pleasure, and I know that I will be working with them  
6 for a couple of years to come.

7 MS. SIMPSON: Good luck with your  
8 business.

9 MS. CAMPBELL: Thank you so much. Have  
10 a good evening.

11 MS. SIMPSON: Thank you for calling in.  
12 Is there someone else on line? Hello, is there  
13 someone else on line?

14 MR. DUCEY: Yes, Dan Ducey.

15 MS. SIMPSON: Dan, you need to speak up?

16 MR. DUCEY: I'm having some issues with  
17 my throat, and so I can only speak up so much so I'm  
18 going to be brief. But thank you for -- thanks.

19 MS. SIMPSON: I'm sorry, we're not able  
20 to hear you. Can you speak up, please. Are you at a  
21 telephone where you can --

22 MR. DUCEY: I'm on a --

23 MS. SIMPSON: Do you have a microphone?

24 MR. DUCEY: Is that any better?

25 MS. SIMPSON: A little bit.

1                   MR. DUCEY: That's pretty much the best  
2    I can do.

3                   MS. SIMPSON: Are you still there, Dan?

4                   MR. DUCEY: I am.

5                   MS. SIMPSON: We can hear you better  
6    now.

7                   MR. DUCEY: Thank you for letting me  
8    speak here. I just want to say that I think DVR does  
9    an outstanding job. They are very hard working people  
10   and they are very -- I'm happy to be involved with  
11   DVR.

12                  MS. SIMPSON: We're losing you again.

13                  MR. DUCEY: Okay. Well, I'm sorry, that  
14   is the best I can do. I've got laryngitis. Anyway, I  
15   just want to say you do an excellent job and I'm glad  
16   they are in our community.

17                  MS. SIMPSON: What community are you  
18   with, Dan?

19                  MR. DUCEY: I'm sorry, Wasilla in the  
20   Valley.

21                  MS. SIMPSON: Would you like to add  
22   anything else?

23                  MR. DUCEY: No, I can't.

24                  MS. SIMPSON: I'm sorry.

25                  MR. DUCEY: I'm sorry, too. I thought I

1       could make a better connection.  Anyway, I just think  
2       they do an excellent job and thank you.

3                       MS. SIMPSON:  We appreciate your  
4       comments.

5                       MS. O'CONNOR:  Thank you, Dan.

6                       MS. SIMPSON:  Is there anyone else on  
7       line?

8                       MS. BISBEE:  We'll just sit and wait.  
9       Becky needs to leave, I'm not sending you away, but  
10      she hasn't behaved.

11                      MS. SIMPSON:  Hello, is there someone on  
12      line?  This is the Governor's Committee, is there  
13      someone on line.

14                      MS. BISBEE:  Why don't we go ahead and  
15      take a break.

16                      MS. ELSTAD:  I'll man the phone.

17                                       (Break)

18                      MS. ELSTAD:  Hello, this is the  
19      Governor's Committee.  Is anyone on line to do public  
20      testimony?

21                      MR. ENCELEWSKI:  I am.

22                      MS. ELSTAD:  Can you give me your name.

23                      MR. ENCELEWSKI:  Brett Encelewski.

24                      MS. ELSTAD:  Well, thank you.  We are  
25      ready to hear your testimony.

1                   MR. ENCELEWSKI: I made a list to make  
2           it nice and brief and to the point for you guys. I'll  
3           just kind of run down.

4                   I began the DVR -- I'm in Kenai, Alaska  
5           here, and I began the DVR process at the Kenai branch  
6           last fall, I think it was August, but I'm just --  
7           August or September, I believe, last fall. I had an  
8           eligibility determination. I'm not actually sure when  
9           it was, but I only found out in the early spring of  
10          this year after having to leave multiple messages to  
11          confirm. My counselor, Mr. Norm Silta has rarely ever  
12          returned a phone call. I have made many and make them  
13          regularly. I have checked in by phone every Monday,  
14          and he always tell me the same thing, that he's made  
15          no progress and he never is willing to make an  
16          appointment to review my case or go over my plan or  
17          whatever.

18                  Norm Silta has not himself reviewed,  
19          revised or even asked me to come in and sign my Voc  
20          Rehab plan, which I have only minimally been involved  
21          in with. His receptionist had me schedule an  
22          appointment, and the last appointment I had, which was  
23          months ago, was only a half hour, which wasn't time  
24          enough to even go over the plan. So he did most of  
25          the plan, the actual drafting of it himself. I don't



1       even know if he actually has it, because I haven't  
2       seen it, I haven't even seen any draft of the plan.  
3       Every time I have talked to Mr. Silta he keeps telling  
4       me --

5                       MS. ELSTAD:  We still have you on line,  
6       continue.

7                       MR. ENCELEWSKI:  He keeps telling me  
8       there is no money for services, that he has not had  
9       time to fax my releases of information.  And, again,  
10      I've signed those releases months and months ago, and  
11      that I should --

12                      UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:  I think you're  
13      talking to the wrong person.  I just called in to let  
14      somebody know about my business plan.

15                      MS. ELSTAD:  Right, it's an 800 number,  
16      and multiple people are calling in.  If you could just  
17      hold for a moment while this other gentleman finishes  
18      his testimony, and then I'll get your name and it will  
19      be your turn.

20                      UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:  I'm sorry.

21                      MS. ELSTAD:  You're good, thank you.  
22      Okay, Brett.

23                      MR. ENCELEWSKI:  So every time I talk to  
24      him he tells me that there is no money for services,  
25      and that he has not even had time to fax my releases

1 of information, which, you know, with no money, I  
2 still don't understand that.

3 And then -- and he always tells me I'm  
4 Alaska Native, so it's part of my overall plan,  
5 inter-agency plan to involve Cook Inlet Tribal  
6 Council. But he just keeps telling me that I should  
7 try harder to connect with Cook Inlet Tribal Council,  
8 that they, quote unquote, would be able to help me  
9 better suggesting that he'd like me to work  
10 exclusively with them.

11 It has been almost a year since I began  
12 the DVR process and many months since I've been  
13 determined eligible, indeed a client. And I have not  
14 even so much as received a ride to an appointment from  
15 the Kenai DVR branch.

16 It is my accusation that I'm being  
17 excluded from service as a result of an unofficial  
18 client filtering policy, that my form of disability is  
19 not severe enough for the Kenai DVR branch, and thus  
20 I'm being mislead, perhaps even lied to, to quote  
21 unquote, shake me off of the Kenai DVR branch as an  
22 eligible and former client.

23 And as a disabled person I assert that  
24 this is an ADA violation and a clear form of  
25 discrimination. That is, of course, the Americans

1 with Disabilities Act.

2 My recommendations would include that at  
3 least one more counselor be appointed to the Kenai  
4 branch, that the Kenai branch's supervisor be called  
5 to the carpet for insubordinate actions, that the  
6 scheduling and budget processes of the Kenai branch be  
7 audited and evaluated. That if the Kenai branch's  
8 primary problem is funding, that said funding be  
9 increased as this may be a symptom of a rapidly  
10 growing demographic.

11 But as far as specific requests, it is  
12 my only specific request to this body that I be given  
13 advocacy and that action be taken to expedite and  
14 ensure that services that I have requested be  
15 delivered, the services that I'm eligible for and that  
16 I'm suffering each day without, and that's all I have  
17 to say.

18 MS. ELSTAD: Thank you, Brett. Have you  
19 been in touch with the Client Assistance Program?

20 MR. ENCELEWSKI: Yes. I've spoke with  
21 Pam Stratton, and she's the one who informed me about  
22 this testimony opportunity. And she has faxed me  
23 paperwork, she faxed me paperwork by 9:00 the next  
24 morning of talking to her, and I'll be completing that  
25 paperwork and faxing it back to her and hopefully --

1 I'm hoping to talk to her again tomorrow to get more  
2 details of how it's going to all work.

3 MS. ELSTAD: Great. Well, that's your  
4 best avenue to go right now, so thank you for your  
5 testimony.

6 Is there one else on line that would  
7 like to testify today?

8 MR. GORDON: Yeah, that is Brad Gordon.

9 MS. ELSTAD: Brad, why don't you go  
10 ahead. We have the Governor's Committee here waiting  
11 to hear from you.

12 MR. GORDON: All's I called in to say  
13 was I did a lot of my own homework and I walked in  
14 with pretty much everything I needed. It took me  
15 about a month-and-a-half to get my business plan  
16 approved. It was just approved around April 1st of  
17 this year. I'm already making money, and I'm back on  
18 my feet. And it's taken me three years through  
19 California, Oregon, and Alaska to find somebody that  
20 would even help me get back to work, and -- hello?

21 MS. ELSTAD: If you could hold one  
22 moment, please, we're taking public testimony. Brad,  
23 are you still on line?

24 MR. GORDON: Yes.

25 MS. ELSTAD: Go ahead, and the other

1 gentleman can just hold for a few minutes.

2 MR. GORDON: So anyhow, it was a great  
3 experience for me, and without DVR I wouldn't be back  
4 in business today. They gave me the tools to get  
5 going again. And they made me dig just a little bit  
6 deeper than what I was doing on my own to make sure  
7 that I was going to be efficient and successful as  
8 well as just going out and doing something. So it's  
9 been nothing but a great experience and I hope the  
10 money stays there for people like myself that are just  
11 scratching to get back out there and do it again. And  
12 we know we're capable of doing it but we just need a  
13 small hand in getting back out there. It's been a  
14 great program.

15 MS. ELSTAD: Well, thank you so much,  
16 Brad. We got you on the record here.

17 MR. GORDON: Bye.

18 MS. ELSTAD: Is there anyone else on  
19 line that would like to testify today? Anyone else on  
20 line?

21 MS. BISBEE: Take a break until we hear  
22 from someone else.

23 (Break)

24 MS. ELSTAD: Good afternoon, this is the  
25 Governor's Committee on Employment and Rehabilitation

1 of People with Disabilities and we're taking public  
2 testimony.

3 MS. CARCAMO: All right.

4 MS. ELSTAD: Hi. Would you like to give  
5 us some testimony today.

6 MS. CARCAMO: Yes, I would please. My  
7 name is Elizabeth Carcamo.

8 MS. ELSTAD: Thank you. And we are  
9 ready to hear you.

10 MS. CARCAMO: I can speak into this  
11 thing?

12 MS. ELSTAD: Yes, you can.

13 MS. CARCAMO: Okay. Last -- it's over a  
14 year now, I was almost -- I worked two jobs most of my  
15 life, and I woke up one day and I wasn't feeling well,  
16 ended up in the hospital.

17 Anyway, I came out of that entire  
18 experience with left sided weakness. My doctor wrote  
19 an order for me to be retrained for a new position  
20 that I had had here at Providence Hospital since 1980.  
21 And I had to give my job up because they held it for  
22 four months and they couldn't hold it anymore.

23 And to this day they still do not know  
24 what's wrong with me. And I'm coming along with  
25 physical therapy and occupational therapy, but I still

1       have trouble with my left upper extremities, my  
2       fingers, coordination, and lifting over my head and  
3       those kinds of things and not being able to lift  
4       weights.

5                       So my doctor has not allowed me to go  
6       back to work. And I have to see him now every three  
7       months and have almost like a full physical with him.  
8       But in the interim all those transitions and going  
9       back and forth to doctors' offices and finding that  
10      there was no one there to advocate for me, and not  
11      even knowing what I was going to ask for because I had  
12      never not worked. All my retirement funds and  
13      disability insurances and things that I have set up, I  
14      set them up for when I got to be 70, 80 or something,  
15      and this sort of thing happened to me, not realizing  
16      here I am now 52 years old and I have all these issues  
17      right now.

18                      But through all that I had no transition  
19      person, and I had doctors and specialists, but as soon  
20      as they were finished with their specialty, it's like,  
21      thank you, ma'am, we're done with you, we're done with  
22      what we can do, why don't you go back to your GP.

23                      And my internist wrote an order for me  
24      to be retrained for a new job and sent me to DVR, and  
25      I heard about DVR through a nurse, Dr. Sagoon's nurse.

1 And I came over there, and from the first moment I got  
2 there I was just in awe from the receptionist that met  
3 us and did the first orientation to now presently.

4 If it wasn't for the people there at  
5 DVR, I probably would have quit. I don't consider  
6 myself suicidal, but I really was -- I had no energy,  
7 I didn't know what was wrong with me, still don't, and  
8 I had no one fighting for me. And then I was given my  
9 counselor Megan Collins, and every step of the way not  
10 knowing what to ask, because that is whole new field  
11 for me, disability, every step of the way, even after  
12 the fact, she would call and ask and say, have you  
13 thought about this or thought about that.

14 And I was sent back to school to be  
15 retrained after taking the two workshops through DVR,  
16 and it's through those workshops that I found out  
17 about skills that I didn't know I had because, as I  
18 said, I've always done one job. I worked for  
19 Providence pretty much all my working life from 1980  
20 until 2006 of December, and so I didn't know what to  
21 look for, what to ask for.

22 I discovered what my other talents were.  
23 And I came to the university. I found out I still had  
24 an interest in the medical field and I had a lot of  
25 other things I could do with the use of my right hand,



1 and through that whole process Megan was there every  
2 step of the way. And she then assigned me and asked,  
3 have you thought about the assistive technology  
4 department because you have this problem and that  
5 problem.

6 So it's because of that that I can now  
7 look forward to a future. And my doctor doesn't know  
8 what it is, he doesn't know if I had a mini stroke and  
9 it's undetected or if I had the start of MS and it's  
10 the symptoms are slower than usual.

11 For my age, being in my 50s, it's  
12 surprising, but then looking back he said, this could  
13 have started in your late 40s and we just missed it.  
14 But all in all, as it pertains to DVR, when I heard of  
15 this opportunity, concerning Megan Collins and Sharon,  
16 the teacher over at the workshops and her assistant  
17 Tom Anderson, I don't know.

18 When I tell people in the community  
19 about these three people, they say that's not the  
20 normal that we hear about DVR and dealing with  
21 disability or dealing with needing help from the  
22 society. And the one thing I did learn in all of this  
23 is I just assumed, like everyone else out there, that  
24 we have these programs and you can just go to them and  
25 everybody will take care of you.

1                   Well, I guess I lucked out because I've  
2           not -- I've not had any horrible experiences. I have  
3           step by step gotten up. I learned about this  
4           opportunity.

5                   So I want to say thanks to the people  
6           that are responsible for setting up such a place, and  
7           I recommend anyone I run into, it seems like I run in  
8           to a lot of people at school with disabilities in my  
9           classes, I highly recommend DVR to them. The fact  
10          that I did not -- I still do not have a set diagnoses,  
11          I have all these symptoms and all these things going  
12          on, has made it rather difficult for me to claim  
13          unemployment, to go back to work, because you have to  
14          be able to work full time, or even claim my disability  
15          insurances that I have set up all these 20 plus years,  
16          because, as it is these days, you have to have a  
17          doctor's clear diagnosis, and, you know, it has to be  
18          life threatening and all these different things.

19                  And so for me DVR has been that one  
20          huge, out-in-the-sea buoy to hold me until I can get  
21          to shore and do something with the rest of my life or  
22          one of those programs. And I thank you all for giving  
23          me this opportunity to say thanks to the people at  
24          DVR. And I would have come in myself personally to do  
25          this testimony, but I have classes right now so I'm

1       actually calling you off campus on my cell phone. But  
2       I just want to say thank you very much, and I would  
3       like to thank the Governor of Alaska, Governor Palin  
4       for allowing this program and all the people that work  
5       with her. And that's all I have to say. Thank you  
6       very much.

7                       MS. ELSTAD: Elizabeth, thank you so  
8       much for calling in.

9                       MS. O'CONNOR: Thank you.

10                      SPEAKER: Bye-bye.

11                      MS. BISBEE: Okay, it's a little after  
12       5:00. We'll conclude the public testimony and see you  
13       all tomorrow at 8:30.

14                      (Meeting adjourned)

15